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31 OCT 87

EL SALVADOR: Murder Derails Government-Rebel Talks

Salvadoran guerrillas are using the murder of a human rights leader earlier this week to break off cease-fire talks and try to undermine the Duarte government's credibility on human rights. The guerrillas boycotted negotiations that were to begin yesterday, and their supporters in San Salvador staged demonstrations charging the government and the US with complicity in the crime. Earlier in the week, the only opposition member of the National Reconciliation Commission resigned, citing the government's inability to control violence. The government exempted the still-unknown killers from the amnesty decree approved this week, assigning the case to its special investigations unit. [REDACTED]

Comment: Although there is no evidence of official complicity in the crime, it gives the guerrillas an excuse to torpedo the peace talks that had put them on the defensive. By implicitly threatening the safety of guerrilla political leaders who planned to return to San Salvador—Ruben Zamora and Guillermo Ungo—the murder serves the interests of both the far right and the radical left. The far right fears that the returning leftist politicians will engage in subversive activities, and some guerrilla leaders may be worried that letting their political allies into the electoral system would further erode the legitimacy of their insurgency. [REDACTED]

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